

SOCIETY OF CHIEF OFFICERS OF TRANSPORTATION IN SCOTLAND (SCOTS)

WRITTEN SUBMISSION

Background

As a strategic body representing Scotland's 32 local authorities and seven Regional Transport Partnerships, SCOTS has a pivotal role to play in the design, delivery and maintenance of the nation's various transport systems. We do that through:

- Promoting excellence and innovation
- Influencing transportation policy
- Identifying ways to move people and goods more sustainably
- Enhancing and protecting the built and natural environments
- Looking after the nation's transport assets
- Improving safety through innovation and design
- Developing professionals through training, research and best practice.

Input to the Draft Scottish Government Budget 2015/16

The draft 2015/16 budget has been considered by members of the SCOTS executive and on behalf of the Society we would offer the following general comments in line with the request from the Committee to keep input to 3 pages.

SCOTS is actively encouraging all member authorities to show the benefits that good transport networks and infrastructure can deliver in terms of economic recovery, bringing forward low carbon opportunities, collaborating across the public sector and focussing resources on early intervention and prevention as the way to deliver improved outcomes.

The focus on those National Indicators which are specifically focussed on transport is welcomed particularly as the member authorities within SCOTS are all focussed on how we “Reduce Scotland’s Carbon Footprint, Reduce Traffic Congestion and Increase the proportion of journeys to work by public or active travel.”

Across the three indicators there is the common need to reduce the need to travel and to do any travel that is required as actively and efficiently as possible. These are reflected typically within the strategic approaches taken across authorities and partnerships.

Reduce Scotland’s Carbon Footprint

Whilst individual authorities are all updating their Climate Change Declaration Reports there are key issues for all in relation to the contribution to Scotland’s Carbon Footprint associated with transport;

- 1) the types of vehicles they use directly and/or are used by those organisations who deliver services on their behalf;
- 2) how those vehicle types are influenced by service delivery models across an authority/partnership area;
- 3) the affordability of more carbon friendly vehicles in terms of purchase, operation and impact on service provision.

The policy interventions currently being deployed tend to be focussed on point 1) and part of point 3) but 2) and 3) represent the major constraints in many instances as organisations consider their action plans. To aid this work there needs to be a shift to broaden the fuel types under consideration beyond electric only and also to look at the options for the higher payload vehicles that are required in the roads, waste and PT sectors. The European Directives around engine standards have impacted upon emissions but the trade off in the move to Euro 6 and beyond is increased consumption of fuel. Therefore it is likely that incentives, potentially of a similar nature to those applied in the waste sector, may be required to shift the focus to reducing the carbon footprint associated with transport element of local service delivery.

Although specific challenge funds have been put in place to offset some of the capital costs of moving to new vehicle technology there are associated requirements for supporting infrastructure and ongoing revenue impacts that are unfunded. Opportunities to tap into European funding streams may be available but will require large scale projects to be developed on a collaborative basis.

Increase the proportion of journeys to work made by public or active transport

The wider prioritisation around local authority funding has tended to place the levels of support to socially necessary bus services under pressure, as will a national BSOG budget allocation at less than transport inflation.

So this then leads operators either to increase income via fares, reduce the level of service or both which tend to reduce the modal share for PT rather than increase it and the contribution to actual indicator and associated outcomes from public transport will not increase.

In relation to Concessionary funds the principle that it is targeted at “people who need it most” would point towards the youth market in terms of those under 25s in employment as much as the older demographic. This also links to emerging Smartcard roll outs and aids work around behaviour change that has a role in overall strategies to reduce congestion that is a key focus for our RTPs and many of our authorities. .

The continuation of the Investment Funds for PT has been positive as local schemes to break down barriers to using PT will aid all three indicators. In terms of the impact on key corridors there is a pressing need to assist authorities and partnerships to deliver the STPR commitments associated with

modal shift and also to identify and take forward more projects focussed on making mass transit options more attractive within all City Regions.

Reduce Traffic Congestion

The work of SCOTS to develop national guidelines for new development reflects the key principles that Streets connect people for interaction, while roads connect towns and cities for travel. Whilst much excellent work is ongoing with Sustrans, Living Streets and Cycling Scotland for example on how to cater for Non Motorised users on the local road network in and connecting our communities there is an absence of a similar emphasis along Trunk Road Corridors that often constrains the effectiveness of the local schemes.

In addition there is a need to ensure that the new asset that is created through the collaborative work on the local delivery of initiatives (that all 32 +7 +1(TS) plus Sustrans, Living Streets, Paths for All etc recognise as joint priorities) is then reflected in the block grant to authorities so that the new networks can be maintained. After all these new links are still about connectivity and linking people to services as well as providing wider health benefits as reflected in how many authorities and partnerships are formally working with NHS on this area.

The final point on addressing traffic congestion is the recognition that in towns and cities there will still be a need to develop schemes that increase capacity on the road network but these need to be complemented by interventions that build on the opportunities and benefits the projects bring to retain those communities as attractive and vibrant destinations.

**Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS)
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